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*Editorial*

## Invaders, get out of Iraq!

**T**he US aggression in, and invasion of, Iraq is utterly arrogant, unjust, illegal, oppressive and devastating. The longer the war of aggression takes, the louder the cry of the Iraqi people and the world's peoples: imperialist invaders out!

Employing superior weaponry, the US relentlessly trampled on Iraqi sovereignty and independence. The truth about the brutal aggression is being glossed over with the slogan of "Iraqi freedom".

By the third week of the war, thousands of Iraqi civilians, aside from soldiers, had been killed by the cowardly and merciless bombing and strafing perpetrated by the aggressors. In Baghdad alone, over 100 wounded patients are brought to hospitals every hour.

The more prominent cases involve the shooting of innocents at checkpoints, coercion, forced searches of homes and arbitrary arrests of men.

The destruction of markets, hospitals, buildings, roads, airports, mass media and communications installations and

other vital civilian infrastructure has also been staggering.

Food and water shortages prevail in occupied cities. The invaders purposely destroyed or shut off food and water supplies, exacerbating the people's plight.

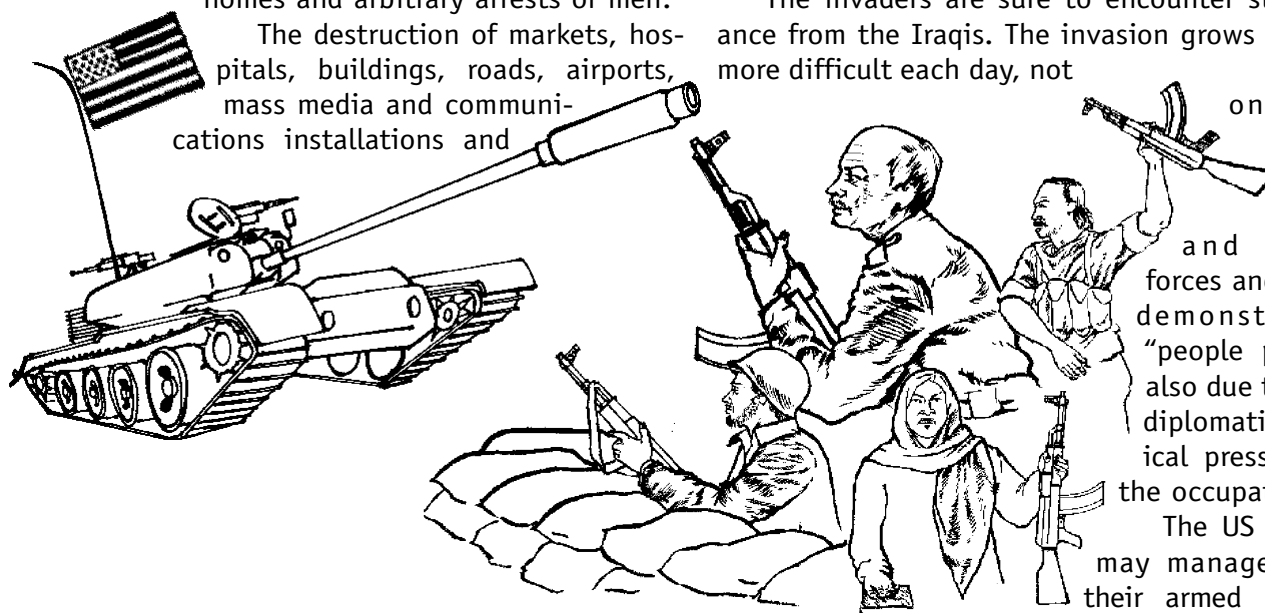
**C**ontrary to the invaders' earlier assumptions that the occupation would be quick and easy, the US and UK forces have encountered many setbacks and obstacles.

Despite their inferior weapons which seemed like mere stones in the face of the aggressors' high tech firepower, the Iraqi people demonstrated commendable patriotic resistance—both through armed struggle and mass protests.

The invaders are sure to encounter stiffer resistance from the Iraqis. The invasion grows increasingly more difficult each day, not

only due to attacks from Iraqi regular and irregular forces and the Iraqis' demonstration of "people power," but also due to mounting diplomatic and political pressure against the occupation.

The US and the UK may manage to secure their armed presence in



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the cities, control the symbols of authority of the Saddam Hussein regime, and establish a new puppet polical authority, but they will surely face more difficulties in the future.

The world bore witness to the unjustness, immorality and illegality of the US war on Iraq; the imperialist greed be-hind it; the lies woven by the US to justify the war; and the extent of the killings and destruction the war has wrought upon Iraq.

This early, the US is already reaping the unprecedented fury of Iraqis, Arabs, Muslims and the peoples of the world. Opposition to the occupation is gaining ground as well as the demand for the immediate withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

The people in the Middle East are greatly outraged by the US. Arab and Muslim unity against the US-Israel conspiracy against Pales-

tine has been further strengthened and broadened by their unity against the US and UK's attack on Iraq.

Many Arabs from Syria, Egypt, Libya, Jordan, Lebanon and other Middle Eastern countries have signified their intention to help Iraq in its fight against the aggression. A number of

them are already in Iraq.

The predatory arrogation of all reconstruction contracts by US companies is an outrage. The seizure by the US of \$1.9 billion from US bank accounts owned by the Iraqi government, businessmen and other Iraqi citizens was likewise supposedly done for the reconstruction of Iraq. The US is gobbling up all the spoils of war with

such avarice that even the UK, its main ally in the war, is worried about ending up with mere crumbs.

The US attack on Iraq has pushed to the hilt the contradictions between the peoples of majority of the world's countries and the leading imperialist power.

The US' ultra-unilateralism has ridden roughshod over its old system of dealing with France, Russia, Germany, China, the Arab countries and other countries that have interests in Iraq and the Middle East. It has exacerbated inter-imperialist contradictions as well as contradictions between the superpower and the rest of the world.

It is currently changing the standards of international relations. The US brazenly ignored the United Nations when it attacked Iraq, rendering the international body inutile and reducing its role to that of cleaning up the mess left by the sole superpower. Even the NATO has lost its relevance and has become a mere coordinator of "humanitarian assistance".

On the other hand, it is of great significance that the Non-Aligned Movement has been revived and the Arab League has taken a stand against US aggression and unilateralism. This will certainly lead to further world disorder.

Not a day passes without anti-war demonstrations being held in different parts of the world, including the US and its main allies. The demonstrations equal, and in many places surpass, the gigantic protest actions against the US aggression in Vietnam in 1965-75. The war in Iraq has reinvigorated the world anti-imperialist movement.

The struggle to expel the invading forces must immediately be intensified.

The current worsening conditions of crisis, repression and war are fertile grounds for the advance of the struggle for national liberation, democracy and socialism the world over.

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# The bloody occupation of Iraq

**B**y the third week of their bombing and artillery attacks, the US military's advance forces had forced their way into the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. But the the US and the United Kingdom's occupation of Iraq is far from being a fait accompli. Despite their inferior weaponry, Iraqi soldiers have been fighting bravely and have made the US' aggression and occupation far from easy.

## Targetting civilians

US and British forces have been deliberately targetting civilians and civilian facilities to put the Iraqi people at their mercy. After 20 days, thousands of civilians have been killed and wounded.

In Baghdad, which has been the focus of the bombings, around 100 civilian casualties are being reported every hour. As US forces took over the international airport outside Baghdad, they destroyed the main power plant providing electricity to the city. This has affected facilities that supply potable water and disrupted normal hospital operations.

In Basra in southern Iraq, British forces bombed a large food store containing several weeks' worth of food supplies for the city. They also bombed the water supply facility on which 1.5 million Iraqis depend and the main power plant supplying electricity to Basra.

In the small town of Hillah in central Iraq, more than 60 were reported killed by coalition bombing on April 3. Most of the fatalities were children hit by cluster bombs. Hundreds more were wounded. Even more were buried in the rubble and have not been reported.

A few days earlier, American tanks had fired on a bus full of civilians in Hillah.

At the same time, US forces shelled Radwaniyeh, a small community in the outskirts of Baghdad as the Americans seized Baghdad airport. The US suspected the community of harboring Iraqi regular

forces. Eighteen civilians were killed, 12 of them children.

In Nasiriyah, a market was struck by a cluster bomb on March 29, instantly killing 250 people in their homes.

In Najaf, American soldiers massacred seven women and children when their vehicle failed to stop at a checkpoint. A few hours later, another American soldier shot an Iraqi civilian out of fear that he was carrying a bomb.

In the nearby region of Haidariya, 15 members of a family were killed when an Apache helicopter bombed their truck. The US also bombed Shuale, a district outside Baghdad.

## Fighting in Baghdad

Using tanks supported by fighter jets, coalition troops forced their way into and occupied key government buildings in Iraq. They destroyed power facilities as well as television and radio stations.

However, Iraqi soldiers con-

stantly returned fire. They were positioned in strategic routes in the entire city, forcing American troops to retreat from time to time. To defeat the Iraqi forces, three US Air Force battalions were called in from Nasiriyah and Najaf to reinforce their troops in Baghdad.

Although the US forces already occupy several buildings, Baghdad is yet to fall under their complete control. Also, they are as yet unable to fully utilize the airport they had supposedly seized in southern Baghdad.

Many American soldiers are trapped inside Baghdad, cut off from their supplies, unable to obtain reinforcements and besieged by irregular Iraqi troops. Their advance or retreat is primarily dependent on air support.

## Casualties among the aggressors

The US can no longer avoid exposing its troops to Iraqi counter-attack. Their casualties are mounting. According to independent reports, by April 6, up to 255 American soldiers had been killed in action, 92 are missing, 785 wounded and 15 captured by Iraqi troops.

Iraqi troops are putting up a fight, taking advantage of their position and familiarity with the area to repulse or divert the invaders from time to time. They are paying

## On April 5...

**130,000** American and British troops took part in the actual invasion of Iraqi cities. They are part of a total of **250,000** troops in the Gulf. The US and the UK launched **725** Tomahawk cruise missiles, undertook **18,000** air missions, dropped **50** cluster bombs and unleashed **12,000** precision guided missiles. So far, **0** or no weapons of mass destruction have been found.

In southern Iraq, **1,500,000** people do not have drinking water and **200,000** children are in danger of dying due to diarrhea. **17,000** Iraqis rely on food aid which has been stalled by the war.

**600** oil wells and refineries are now under American and British control. The US congress has earmarked **\$80** billion to defray the mounting cost of the war.

AB

dearly with every operation that exposes their troops and equipment. On the Iraqi side, 1,460 soldiers have been killed by the bombings, 800 wounded and 985 captured by coalition forces.

### Control on mass media and propaganda

To control information coming from Iraq, the US and

the UK embedded 600 journalists with their military units. Every hour, they release the statements of the US Central Command. Like their colleagues inside Iraq, their reports are monitored by the military. The troops decide what and when they can report. Those who violate their orders are kicked out. The US threatens and intimidates other journalists who do not subject themselves to the military command. **AB**

## Patriotic groups continue protests

**A**ntiwar protests by different democratic and patriotic forces continue across the country. Along with their opposition to the US imperialist war against Iraq, the protesters also condemn the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime's all-out war in Mindanao.

"Stop the war in Mindanao and withdraw support for the war in Iraq!" the Moro people cried in unison in their protest actions against the Macapagal-Arroyo and Bush governments.

Led by the Bangsamoro Alliance Against Injustice, the Moro people launched one of the biggest protest actions in Cotabato City on April 2. They demanded that the regime observe the ceasefire to stop the ongoing mass evacuations and allow civilians to return to

t h e i r  
h o m e s .  
They  
also

called for the regime's withdrawal of support for the US aggression on Iraq.

Some 5,000 marched along Ayala Avenue in Makati City on March 28 led by various religious groups, professionals and businessmen. BAYAN, KMU, KMP, Gabriela, Kadamay, Anakpawis and other mass organizations likewise joined the protest action.

Militant groups staged a lie-in protest along Session Road in Baguio City. Masses were held in the cities of Laoag and San Fernando in the Ilocos region. Before proceeding to Makati, the delegates from Pangasinan, Tarlac and Pampanga held a brief rally in the city of San Fernando, Pampanga while delegates from Nueva Ecija staged a caravan from Cabana-tuan City. People from Bulacan, Laguna and Naga City also launched a caravan.

In the Visayas, rallies led by BAYAN and the Justice not War Coalition (JNWC) were held in Cebu City and Tagbilaran City.

Earlier, local governments in the Visayas passed resolutions condemning the war in Iraq and calling for the regime's withdrawal of support for the war. A cultural rally was held in Bacolod City while an interfaith forum and prayer rally were held in Tacloban City.

The JNWC and US Troops Out of MindaNOW! held a procession in Davao City. Before this, a manifesto by Catholic bishops calling for a stop to the war in Iraq and in Mindanao and to let justice prevail was circulated in the island. In General Santos City, a protest march was launched, participated in by people from South Cotabato, Sarangani and Gen. Santos City. A candle march was held in Cagayan de Oro City.

Other sectors of society likewise held various forms of protest.

On March 27, artists and their representatives from different parts of the country gathered to attend the Solidarity Gathering for Peace at the Cultural Center of the Philippines. Award-winning director and poet Marilou Diaz-Abaya enjoined all artists to boldly express their sentiments through their works. The organizations that attended were, among others, the Concerned Artists of the Philippines, PETA, Ugat-Lahi, Gabriela, Mindanao People's Coalition, Philippine Islamic Council, Mindanao Commission on Women and others. A similar gathering was held in the cities of Davao, Cagayan de Oro, Iloilo and in New York City, USA. Four hundred journalists and mass media workers signed an antiwar manifesto entitled Media for Peace. **AB**





# Bombings in Davao

**The US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime plotted the bombings in Davao to justify further military rule and imperialist intervention**

**T**he perpetrators of the April 3 and March 4 bombings in Davao City are one and the same: the US-Macapagal-Arroyo regime.

On April 3, a bomb was detonated at the Sasa Wharf in Davao City, killing 16 persons. Hours later, four mosques in the city were bombed and strafed and still other bombs exploded in other parts of Mindanao. Meanwhile, more than

20 were killed in the bombing of Davao City airport on March 4.

All these acts of terrorism have the same purpose: to create the conditions for the escalation of repression and imperialist intervention in the Philippines. The

regime intends to make the bombings appear as the handiwork of Moros—particularly the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, supposedly in collusion with the Abu Sayyaf, the al Qaeda and the Jemaah Islamiah. The regime likewise concocted the story that the New People's Army was also involved in the March 4 and subsequent bombings. The regime also aims to bolster its "terrorist" tag on the MILF and NPA and sabotage the peace talks between the government and the revolutionary forces.

To put further stress on the story that Moros were behind the explosions, the actual perpetrators lay the blame on just about any Moro individual. Immediately after the bombing on March 4, the regime released an obviously fabricated letter purportedly from Hamsiraji Sali of the Abu Sayyaf implicating the MILF and the NPA in the bombing. An innocent Moro who was waiting for arriving relatives and was killed in the bombing was accused of being a suicide bomber. Nine alleged MILF forces were arbitrarily arrested by the regime. The April 3 bombing and strafing of mosques were later added to the scene to make it appear that non-Moros were retaliating. More than 50 Moro civilians have already been arrested and five more have been abducted and are still missing.

These terrorist attacks are but a continuation of a plan hatched by the Pentagon and the CIA. US Defense Sec. Donald Rumsfeld ordered Defense Sec. Angelo Reyes to execute the plan during the latter's visit to the US just days before the bombing at the Davao City airport. Such schemes are desperate attempts to sidestep strong protests and circumvent the constitutional ban on American troops engaging in combat operations in the Philippines. The US wants to concentrate its forces on the NPA and the MILF. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo *continued on p. 6*

## Is Michael

**T**he "terrorist bombings" this March and April in Davao, the successive bombings of mosques and other public places in Mindanao, and even the bombings in Metro Manila last year are the handiwork of persons receiving orders from US agencies and Malacañang. One of them is Michael Terrence Meiring.

Who is Michael Meiring? He is an American explosives expert who is an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency. He works under the direction of US agencies and their counterparts in the Philippines.

On May 15, 2002, Meiring's modus operandi was exposed when he had to be brought to a hospital in Davao after being hit by a bomb he was preparing inside his rented room at Evergreen Hotel. The news gained prominence because it coincided with the "terrorist bombings" occurring in different parts of Mindanao.

Before an even bigger exposé could take place, agents of the National Security Agency, a Malacañang agency, and the US Federal Bureau of Investigation, immediately took Meiring. Upon arrival in Manila, he was immediately whisked to the US embassy and flown to a US naval base in San Diego, California. His hospital fees in Davao were taken care of by Vice Consul Michael Newbill of the US embassy.

Meiring stayed for about ten years in the Philippines. For about a year he resided in Metro Manila and Northern Luzon. But for a long time, he was based in Mindanao.

He armed and taught a lot of people in Mindanao on the use of explosives. He has close ties with the Abu Sayyaf who frequently asked him to purchase arms using US Federal Reserve notes taken from kidnapping.

Meiring proved valuable to the US and Philippine military leadership for the secret coordination of the "terrorist bombings" in Mindanao last year. With the recent onslaught of violence by the US-Arroyo regime, Meiring seems to have returned. AB



## Banana prices raised in Central Mindanao

Farmers of Central Mindanao successfully raised the price of banana from P5-8 to P6-9 per kilo. Farmers from Misamis Oriental were able to achieve this last year through their unified action and confrontations with merchant-usurers in the area.

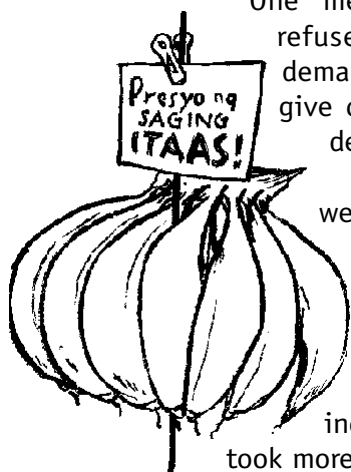
Starting with only one town in northeast Misamis Oriental, the campaign expanded to five towns. Due to the correctness of their calls, the farmers were able to draw the support of professionals, the local government, officials from the Department of Agriculture and even the chief of the Philippine National Police.

They also gained the support of some "buyers" and owners of banana warehouses in the barrios due to their sustained and broad campaign. They maximized the use of radio and other media to reach areas not covered by their organization.

More than 200 peasants joined the confrontation with four big merchant-usurers. They did not immediately achieve the desired one peso price increase.

One merchant-usurer adamantly refused to accede to their demands while some did not give categorical answers to the demands.

But because the peasants were resolute, they decided not to sell their produce until the merchant-usurers increased the price. As a result, the merchant-usurers were forced to increase prices. The campaign took more than a month. AB



## A victory for propaganda and education

### New revolutionary radio program thunders through Bicolandia

The Bicol region has successfully launched a revolutionary broadcast production. Since last year, *Dagundong ng Bicol*, a revolutionary radio program, has been coming out. It aims to clarify and propagate the revolutionary political stand as well as revolutionary culture to the people in the region. *Dagundong* is distributed in compact disk (CD) form.

*Dagundong's* program is divided into a number of segments. The most prominent among them is *Tudlang Talakayan* (Discussions that Hit the Bull's Eye) that discusses and analyzes the hottest news in the region, the country and overseas.

During *Tudlang Talakayan's* first broadcast, it tackled the all-out war being waged by the Macapagal-Arroyo regime, US armed intervention in the Philippines and the "terrorist" tag on the CPP-NPA-NDF. Lively discussions were interspersed with revolutionary and progressive songs to add to the program's appeal.

There is another segment entitled *Dalugi kan Rebolusyon* (Seeds of Revolution) whose content is revolutionary creative art and literature.

*Sulo ng Pakikibaka* (Torch of Struggle) features news on the most prominent developments in the various guerrilla fronts and provinces in the region. Another fine segment is *Sulo-Syensya* (Beacon of Science), which contains "scientific analyses of nature as well as new knowledge and technology relevant to the life and struggle of the majority peasant masses." Information tackled in this segment enriches the knowledge of comrades and the masses.

A delightful segment to comrades and the masses is one called *Agi-agi sa Buhay asin Pakikibaka ni Daday*

"Davao...", from page 5

barefacedly exploited the tragedy for her image-building. She hypocritically announced that she will donate the 1 million-peso fund intended for her grand birthday bash to pursue the perpetrators.

A day after the bombing, Arroyo placed under a

"state of unlawful violence" not only Davao but the whole of Regions 11 and 12. The regime wants to use the incident as a pretext for the immediate enactment of fascist bills like the Anti-Terrorism Bill and the National ID system that are being pushed by the US and Malacañang. AB



(Stories of Daday's Life and Struggle), a play about a 10-year-old child. In the first broadcast, the play told of the failure of an enemy special intelligence team to fool Daday into believing that it was an NPA unit. Aside from the innate effectivity of theater in propaganda work, the play was likewise enjoyable because of its humorous scenes.

The staff that produced the broadcast said that coming up with *Dagundong ng Bikol* entails a simple process. All they needed were a few pieces of readily available equipment. They used the computer programs Cool Edit Pro to edit the broadcast, Band in a Box for the sound effects and Wave-MP3 Converter to convert the product into MP3 format. They also used basic audio equipment like bi-directional microphones and recorders, among others.

Aside from the staff charged with the region's propaganda work, many comrades helped in creating the various segments of *Dagundong*.

*Dagundong ng Bikol* is a fine response to the Party's call to further improve and broaden propaganda and education work. It answers the urgent need to disseminate important information and analyses on issues as well as revolutionary culture.

Aside from newspapers and other reading material, video cassettes, CDs and other instruments of propaganda and education work, continued broadcasts will further raise the level of consciousness and militancy of comrades and the masses and further assist in the revolution's advance.

### *Cassava Plantation Project*

## A heavier burden to the peasant masses

**T**he Cassava Plantation Project imposed by Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco in southwest Isabela has brought nothing but landlessness, hardship, widespread hunger and intense militarization. Under the project, small landholdings in Isabela have been transformed into a huge cassava plantation to be used by Cojuangco's various businesses.

In collusion with the Dy warlord-bureaucrat clan, Cojuangco grabbed 150,000 hectares in 11 towns of Isabela (Mallig, Quezon, Sta. Maria, Cabagan, Delfin Albano, Quirino, Sto. Tomas, Ilagan, Aurora, Gamu and Burgos) for his "cassava project". This is probably the biggest landgrabbing case in the history of the puppet republic. Immediately, Cojuangco plans to expand this to 250,000 hectares. In the near future, the plantation will likely extend to up to a million hectares. Presently, it has a contract with farmers and the local government of Quirino and Cagayan for the planting of cassava.

More than 100,000 peasants will be affected by the project in Isabela alone. More than 30,000 peasants will immediately lose their lands. Most of them have

been tilling so-called "idle public lands" for decades. Cojuangco has grabbed these landholdings wholesale. In Mallig, he even expropriated an 817-hectare relocation area set aside in 1991 for more than 100 families victimized by the Pinatubo explosion.

**Corporative scheme.** In order for Cojuangco to fully control all these lands, the Department of Agrarian Reform placed all 250,000 hectares of it under the "corporative scheme". Under the scheme, a bogus cooperative, the Valley Planters Development Corporation, was formed to subsume all land claimants and owners to the project. On paper, it would appear that the individual farmers still owned their lands but in reality, they have been forced by the San Miguel Corporation Cassava

Plantation Project (SMCCPP) to cede their individual rights to the land in exchange for membership in VAPDECO. In exchange, they will receive worthless shares from VAPDECO. Only VAPDECO will be allowed to transact business with SMCCPP.

Although in essence a private venture, loans for the peasants will come from the government through the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP). These debts will be paid with an exorbitantly high interest rate of 36% per cropping. The LBP will automatically deduct the amount of the debts incurred by the farmers from the payments given by the SMCCPP to VAPDECO. Only the remainder will be divided among the peasant members of VAPDECO.

The only crop allowed in the land area covered is cassava. SMCCPP will serve as the sole market for the entire cassava harvest. SMC will process the cassava into flour and ingredients for beer and ice cream production as well as chicken feed, hog mash and fish meal intended mainly for export. It will construct four flour mills and feed mills in Isabela for the project. The construction of infrastructure such

*Continued on page 8*



## Offensive in Bulacan: 7 enemy soldiers killed, 11 wounded

NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY (NPA) guerrillas in Eastern Bulacan turned the tables on a joint PNP-AFP force that attempted to encircle them on March 29 in Angat, Bulacan. Seven enemy soldiers were killed and 11 were wounded. Two Red fighters were martyred in the offensive.

A 25-strong platoon of the NPA-Eastern Bulacan front had gathered that day in Pulong Yantok, Angat for a study session and celebration to mark the 34th anniversary of the NPA. They first spotted the police and military forces approaching at about 5:30 in the morning. Since they were at a vantage position, they were able to snipe at the enemy first.

Despite the enemy's superiority in terms of arms and number, the NPA were able to maintain initiative in the firefight. The Red fighters confiscated six M16s, one .45 pistol and six bandoliers of bullets.

Apart from the two martyred Red fighters, the rest of the platoon safely retreated. A so-called pursuit operation by the police up to Barangays Matandang Sili and Engkanto in Pandi town proved futile.

Among those killed was Chief Inspector Expedito Delgado, vice director of the 305th PMG. Among the wounded were Supt. Fernando Villanueva, commander of the 305th PMG-PNP who was hit in the right shoulder and right ear, Insp. Lauro Apostol of the Meycauayan PNP, Insp. Solomon of the Special Action Force-PNP and Capt. Mario Marron of the 56th IB.

The entire revolutionary movement salutes and pays tribute to the heroism of the two martyrs, Arnel San Juan (Ka Gerald) and Norbel Ortega (Ka Cani). Heartfelt condolences were also extended to their loved ones.

### *"Cassava," from page 7*

as roads and irrigation systems has been left to the local government units.

**Huge expenditures.** SMCCPP's promises that the peasants will earn huge incomes have been proven false. The project has instead buried them deep in debt due to heavy production expenses. The claimed minimum P26,000 net income per farmer for every hectare planted to cassava is a far cry from reality.

The necessary inputs are priced sky high. Wages for the additional labor needed for the labor-intensive planting and harvesting of hectares of cassava are expensive. For 5.4 hectares, a farmer needs to borrow around P76,000. This is exclusive of the amount needed to support the basic needs of the farmer and his family.

On top of this, a big percentage of the harvest has been ruined

in many areas due to drought and delayed harvests. Only into its first year, the project has already burdened the farmers with huge debts.

In the town of Luna and in Santiago City, peasant borrowings from the LBP have exceeded P1 million. These are exacerbated by the very high interest rates. Not a single centavo was spent to meet the needs of the farmers and their families.

The peasants were further burdened when the Land Bank refused to release funds for the wages of additional farm workers hired to help harvest the cassava. The Land Bank has yet to release up to P57,000 in wage funds. Thus, more than a third of the harvest rotted underground.

**Intensifying militarization.** To suppress the people's opposition to the cassava project, Cojuangco and his cohorts use the reactionary military and police in

the region to sow terror and fear. The local peasant association has already recorded 11 cases of grave threats perpetrated by the military and police.

Two battalions guard the project and military camps have been set up in Delfin Albano, Mallig and Santiago City. Another camp has been set up in Sta. Isabel, Ilagan. Martial rule virtually prevails in southwestern Isabela. A curfew has been imposed and checkpoints put up. Peasants have no right whatsoever to assemble. Anyone who dares express his opposition is placed under surveillance, intimidated and threatened.

Nonetheless, the peasants in the area are determined to intensify their protest against the land-grabbing of Cojuangco and his cronies. The people of the area have long been opposed to the project. They are ever ready to face police and military repression. **AB**





## Elsewhere in the country...

THE NPA LAUNCHED A NUMBER OF SUCCESSFUL tactical offensives nationwide in conjunction with the commemoration of its 34th founding anniversary. Fifteen soldiers were killed in firefights with the NPA in the second half of March.

**Oriental Mindoro.** The NPA ambushed and killed five soldiers from the 68th IB in Pinamalayan on March 22. Seized from the troops were four M16s and an M203 grenade launcher.

A bomb was thrown at the truck they were riding, killing four soldiers on the spot, including their commander. A soldier who was wounded later died.

Another ambush was launched on the night of March 27 against a platoon of the 16th IB and Task Force Arrowhead in Sitio Balite, Barangay Hagan, Bongabon. One soldier was killed on the spot while another died before reaching the Roxas District Hospital.

**Palawan.** A CAFGU element was killed while a soldier of the 2nd Marine Battalion Landing Team of the Philippine Marines was wounded in an encounter with the NPA in Barangay San Rafael, Puerto Princesa City on March 26.

**Bohol.** Two soldiers were brought to the Central Command Hospital of Camp Lapu-lapu, Cebu City on March 28 after an encounter with Red fighters in Sitio Masingin, Barangay Tabuk, Danao. A sergeant from the 6th Special Forces Battalion was wounded in the thigh while a soldier from Charlie Coy, 15th IB was hit in the left leg. This occurred two days after another soldier died in Penducon, Barangay Cabatuan, Danao.

**Bukidnon.** Three soldiers from the 31st Special Forces Battalion and an element of the CAFGU was killed in an ambush in Dao, San Fernando on the 34th anniversary of the NPA's establishment. A Red fighter was martyred in the firefight.

**Albay.** NPA guerrillas ambushed soldiers of the 22nd IB on patrol in Tababo, Pio Duran on the afternoon of March 30. One soldier was killed on the spot in the first volley of fire.

## Thousands attend Ka Bob's burial

Some 2,500 people attended the funeral of Ismaelito "Ka Bob" Giganto in Tapaz, Capiz on March 29. Ka Bob, commander of the Jose Percival Estocado Command, was martyred in an NPA ambush on February 24. Seven soldiers of the Special Operations Team under Task Force Panay were killed in this operation in Daan Sur, Tapaz.

Most of those who attended were dressed in red to express solidarity with the revolutionary movement and their condolences for the death of a revolutionary. Relatives of Ka Bob carried flags of the CPP and NPA. Tributes given by the Coronacion "Waling-Waling" Chiva Command of Panay Island and the Jose Percival Estocado Command-Central Front were read during the burial ceremonies.

## Mass evacuations worsening in Mindanao

The number of refugees in Mindanao is increasing, exceeding recorded evacuations resulting from war in the last five years, according to the latest tally.

There were 122,114 evacuees in the last five months alone. Most of them came from the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao, North Cotabato and Sultan Kudarat.

In the refugee centers of Pikit, North Cotabato alone, there are about 47,000 evacuees including 15,000 children. As of the last count, 36 children have died, with another 13 added on April 2. Up to 366 children are confined in hospitals due to various illnesses.

## The news in review

### GMA's offer of air space for US war assailed

Politicians, personalities and other sectors slammed Arroyo's offer to the US to use Philippine air space to show support for the invasion of Iraq. Arroyo made the offer on March 22. She was criticized for her "overeagerness" to support the US government.

### Renato Constantino honored

Renato Constantino, renowned nationalist historian, author and educator, was feted on March 10, on the occasion of his 84th birthday. The gathering took place at Bahay Kalayaan in the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City. Politicians and activists delivered speeches that stressed the continuing relevance of nationalism in the face of greater foreign control in the Philippines.

### **Government approves Meralco petition**

THE Senate approved 50 electricity distribution franchises for Manila Electric Company (Meralco) on March 20. The 25-year franchises expand Meralco's control over the distribution of electricity to most areas of Luzon. A day later, the Energy Regulatory Commission also approved Meralco's petition to "unbundle" or split charges for electricity into several separate items. This will result in an estimated increase of 13 centavos per kilowatt hour in electricity costs.

### **Kuratong Baleleng cases reopened**

THE Supreme Court ordered on April 1 the reopening and immediate resolution of the multiple murder case filed against Gen. Panfilo Lacson for the killing of Kuratong Balaleng Gang members in 1995. Lacson was then chief of the so-called PNP anti-kidnapping task force. Prior to the order, Lacson had declared his intention to run for president in the 2004 elections.

### **Bayan Muna to file libel case**

BAYAN Muna is set to file a libel case against the television station RPN-9 for airing a documentary last April 3 categorizing Bayan Muna as a "front organization" of the Communist Party of the Philippines. Bayan Muna reiterated that it is a legitimate organization.

### **Gen. Abaya new AFP chief**

LT. Gen. Narciso Abaya will be installed as the new AFP chief by Pres. Macapagal-Arroyo on April 8. Abaya is at present the chief of the Southern Command of the AFP.

### **Deadly SARS**

AROUND 15 persons, including one Filipino, have died in Hongkong of a new disease called SARS or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. SARS first appeared in Guangdong, China in November 2002 and in Hongkong in February. SARS has also been reported in

Europe and Canada. Specialists are still looking for a cure for the disease.

### **North Korea braces for US aggression**

IN the face of US intimidation and military threats, North Korea asserted its right to possess nuclear arms last October. It knows that the capacity to produce nuclear arms is the only deterrent to US imperialist aggression and occupation. It would not be far-fetched for the US to invade either Iran or North Korea next. In January 2002, the US aligned the two countries along with Iraq as the "axis of evil".

In January 2003, North Korea resigned from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, an international agreement that one-sidedly grants powerful nations the exclusive right to possess nuclear arms. The US has used various means in an attempt to coerce the North Korean government. It accused North Korea last October of actively producing nuclear weapons.

As it did with Iraq, the US is pressuring North Korea to have its nuclear weapons production facilities inspected and is forcing it to disarm. For this purpose, US imperialism is bolstering its military forces in Japan and South Korea and has intensified espionage activities against North Korea.

North Korea refuses to be complacent. It is preparing its armed forces and people for the possibility that the country will be next in line after Iraq. North Korea also warned on March 26 that it would no longer honor the 1953 armistice should the US refuse to put a stop to its armed provocations. The armistice is a temporary agreement meant to pave the way for the resolution of the Korean War that took place in the 1950s.

On March 29, North Korea announced that it would oppose all pressure to subject itself to inspection or to disarm. It pointed out that Iraq is undergoing its current predicament because it succumbed to pressure from the imperialists.